

May 30th, 1848.

Vice President MORTON in the Chair.

(The following papers were reported for publication in the last No. but unavoidably deferred.)

*Description of two new species of Onychocephalus, from the Western Coast of Africa.*

BY EDWARD HALLOWELL, M. D.

ONYCHOCEPHALUS. Dumeril and Bibron.

*Generic Characters.*—Head provided with plates; depressed, terminating in front in a thin or cutting edge. Rostral plate folded under the snout, and expanding as a disk upon the head, of variable form. An anterior frontal, a frontal properly called, a pair of supra-oculars, a pair of parietals, an inter-parietal, a pair of nasals, a pair of fronto-nasals, a pair of preoculars, a pair of oculars. Nostrils hemidisoidal opening inferiorly between the nasal and the fronto-nasal. Eyes lateral, distinct."

*Onychocephalus Liberiensis.* (See Plate, fig. 1 and 2.)

*Specific Characters.*—Length of tail equal to transverse diameter of head taken at its middle; tail incurvated, conical, terminating in a spine; the upper portion of the rostral plate very convex, quadrilateral, its cutting edge slightly arched, not extending across the snout; colour above blackish, variegated with yellow; under surface yellow, with black spots upon the sides.

*Description.*—Head rather small, wedge shaped above, rounded anteriorly; the rostral plate is large, convex superiorly, presenting four sides at its upper surface; of these the posterior is rounded where it lies in contact with the anterior frontal; the lateral margins are slightly curved and are in contact with the fronto nasal; the anterior margin forms a projecting convex edge where it is continuous with the under surface of the rostral which is four-sided; the lateral margins of this under portion of the rostral are concave, so as to receive the nasal plates which lie along their exterior border; the inferior margin is the most narrow, its middle portion, (about one-third of it) projecting backward, and forming part of the margin of the upper lip; the nasal plate is long and narrow, broadest near the middle, being somewhat triangular in shape, the apex presenting forward; the nostrils are elongated narrow slits, looking outward and backward, and are placed in the fronto nasal suture, formed by the juxtaposition of the nasal and fronto nasal plates; the fronto-nasal are narrow and oblong, much broader below; anteriorly they lie in contact with the rostral, presenting a slightly undulating line at their junction; the posterior margin is deeply incurvated except toward its superior extremity; it lies in contact with the preocular which is received into the hollow formed by its posterior margin; the preocular has the form of an oval disk with a superior and inferior extremity, which are pointed; the ocular plate, which is immediately behind it, is very large; its posterior margin is con-

vex, the anterior concave; the eye is placed in the angle formed by the junction of the preocular, and the supraocular; the latter is a narrow, oblong plate, with a rounded posterior margin; the anterior frontal is a large plate immediately in contact with the rostral, measuring two lines in its transverse direction in the specimen examined; its posterior margin is rounded; the frontal is a very small plate compared with the anterior frontal, also with a rounded posterior margin; it is in contact in front with the anterior frontal, and with the preocular; immediately behind it is the inter-parietal which is less extended in the transverse direction than the frontal, and its posterior border is much less convex than that of the former plate, and of the scale behind it; the inter-parietal are placed immediately behind the supraocular and the posterior frontal, and are in contact at their internal margin with the frontal, and externally with the ocular; the supra labials, four narrow, elongated plates, margin each side of the upper lip; that nearest the angle of the mouth is the longest; the eyes are small, but distinct, placed upon the side of the head near the superior extremity of the preocular; scales upon the chin, neck, and throat small, increasing in size upon the body and tail, where they are of nearly uniform size; these scales are rounded posteriorly, more extended transversely than in length. There are 28 longitudinal and 369 transverse rows upon the body, and 11 rows upon the tail.

*Coloration.*—Above brownish, approaching to black, clouded with yellow; under surface yellow for the most part, presenting a few spots of black, chiefly upon the sides.

*Dimensions.*—Entire length 2 feet 4 lines: length of head 5 lines; greatest breadth 4 lines; length of tail 5 lines; greatest circumference of body 2 inches, 9 lines.

*Habitat.*—Liberia, Western Coast of Africa. A specimen in the Museum of the Academy.

*Habits.*—Dr. Savage informs me that this animal inhabits the domicils of the "white ant" (*Termes bellicosus* of Smeathman,) which probably constitutes its food, and hence has received the name of *Nyonk-re-teai*, literally the *white ant snake*. (See Proceed. for April, 1848, p. 37.) Its tenacity of life is very remarkable.

*ONYCHOCEPHALUS nigro-lineatus.* (See Plate, fig. 3.)

*Specific Characters.*—Tail short, of same length as head measured transversely; rostral plate four-sided, longer than broad, rounded posteriorly, the sides slightly convex; nostrils in the fronto-nasal suture; body cylindrical, slender, presenting numerous lines of black upon a ground of silvery grey.

*Description.*—Head small, depressed, convex in front, rostral plate more extended in the longitudinal direction than transversely, its sides slightly convex, rounded posteriorly; the under part of the rostral is urceolate in form, having a small projection at its posterior extremity; it is somewhat excavated laterally, passing backward between the nasal plates; it presents a well defined edge, at the line of demarcation between its superior portion, extending across it; the nasal are narrow, oblong plates, placed between the fronto-nasal, and the rostral at its inferior part, in contact above with the fronto-nasal; the fronto-nasal are situated above between the rostral and the preocular; they are much more narrow superiorly than at their inferior portion, where they are in contact with

Fig. 1

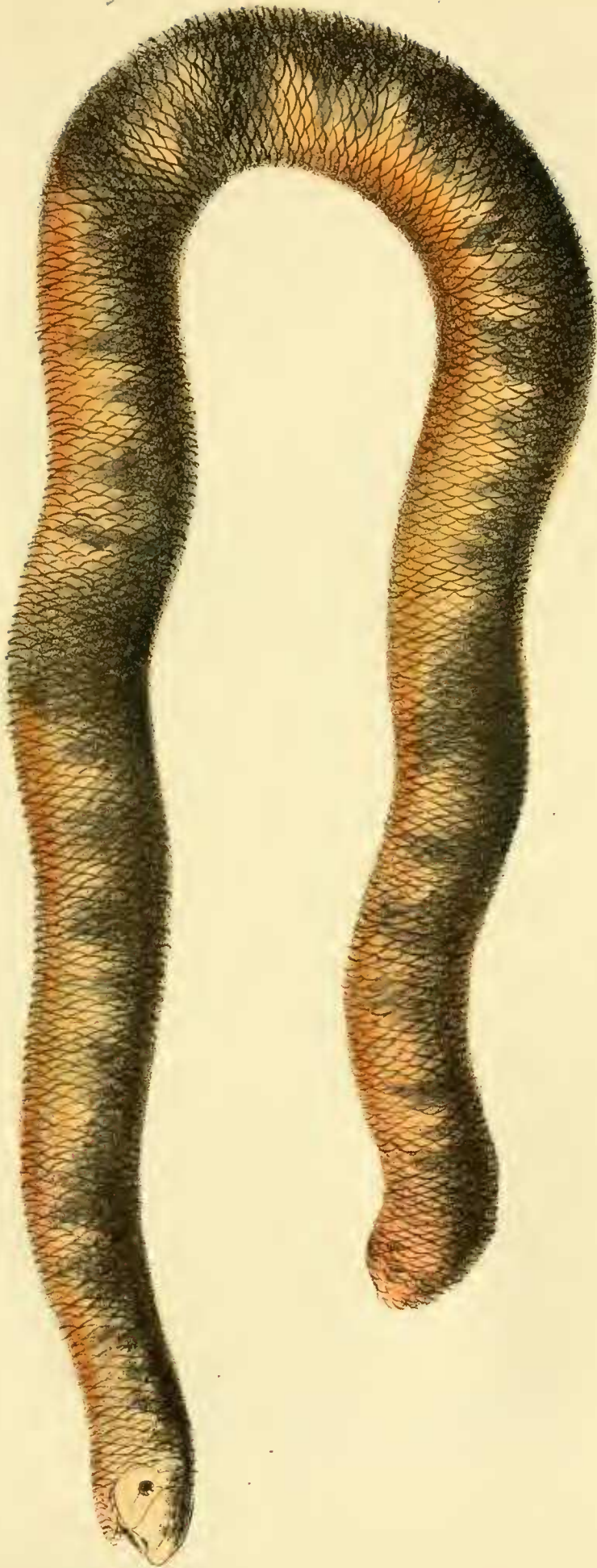


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

